



CASE STUDY

1. Title: "Circle of Friends" – Pilot Project

2. Area (Local Authority/School (if applicable) and Region): Sheffield

Project developed by the Inclusion Project (Chilypep) and Children's Voices

Piloted in two schools for primary aged children:

- Primary school in area of considerable economic, cultural and racial diversity
- Special school for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties

3. What was the issue?

The Circle of Friends Project has been developed in Sheffield through the partnership of the Inclusion Project (CHILYPEP) and Children's Voices. The project was planned, developed and delivered by two members of staff, one from each agency.

The Circle of Friends Project sought "to develop meaningful friendships and support networks through attendance at a weekly lunch time club".

The aim of the project was "to support marginalised /disadvantaged young people (8-13 years) to develop emotional literacy skills, friendships and to tackle bullying in a positive approach".

4. What action was taken?

The plan for the project was to:

- Year 1 - pilot the project in two primary schools, at least one a special school, in the 2008 / 2009 school year
- Year 2 - continue the project in the initial two primary schools, delivering the project with school staff, and expand into a further two schools: consideration would be given as to whether to engage with early years and / or secondary school
- Year 3 – initial two primary schools deliver programme with own staff: second

year schools programme delivered in conjunction with school staff

It was hoped that if the evaluation of the project was positive then a strategy would be developed so that Circle of Friends could be developed in all Sheffield primary schools.

The role of the ABA Regional Adviser was to provide advice and support in planning the programme and carry out evaluation on the effectiveness of the programme at the end of Year One.

5. What impact has this had (so far)?

Both schools were extremely positive about what Circle of Friends had achieved and both are looking forward to the programme running again in the 2009 / 2010 school year. In the 2009 / 2010 the programme will be delivered by one project facilitator with one or two members of the school staff.

The project facilitators, school link staff and pupils, particularly in School A, were able to articulate the impact that Circle of Friends had had. That the pupils in School B were less able to do this reflects the nature of their special educational needs.

School A pupils said that they were better at:

- Working together to solve problems
- Making friends
- Listening to and understanding others
- Sharing feelings with others
- Providing help and support to others, not just within the group e.g. in the playground
- Dealing with bullying

School A was able to identify the gains made by both the target and role model pupils.

In School B the staff saw that the programme had been extremely successful, certainly more successful than they had anticipated. There had been some initial doubts about whether the practice could be developed for a special school where the pupils had such a level of special educational needs.

Staff said that there was:

- Sense of fun and enjoyment
- Sense of personal and group achievement

The staff were surprised how quickly the pupils developed a group identity. They commented on how the group had developed their own rules, discuss behaviour and challenge themselves to keep under control. The school link person identified the following improvements for all of the group:

- Helping in making and sustaining positive friendships with peers
- Helping in making for open and positive relationships with adults
- Encouraging feelings of responsibility towards and care for others: ability to empathise
- Considering thoughts, feelings and behaviour of self and others

6. How did the above action help to embed anti-bullying work in your area?

In Year 2 the project is being delivered again in the two schools with school staff now acting as co-deliverers: in Year 3 they will take full responsibility for the programme. Unfortunately due to cuts in staff there has not been the expansion into a further two schools in Year 2.

In Sheffield the findings of the evaluation study will be reported to the SEAL / Anti-Bullying Multi-Agency Group. It is hoped that through the commissioning process funding will be acquired to expand the programme.

The Circle of Friends Project and their schools will present at an ABA Regional Network Meeting in Spring or Summer 2010.

7. Additional information (OPTIONAL):

Evaluation Report enclosed

Children's Voices and The Inclusion Project (CHILYPEP) are based at the Remington Youth and Community Centre, 200 Remington Road, Parson Cross, Sheffield, S5 9AG.

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